

THE SO-CALLED SYMPATHY OF MARKETS

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one security, we are informed, "displayed sympathy" with another, and accompanied its fall or rise with a correspondingly friendly change; shares become "buoyant" or "depressed" as though they were affected by emotions. It is unfortunate that money articles for the guidance of the public are not expressed in sober and rational prose. But this is consonant with an age of exaggeration and artificialness.

Let us interpret these metaphors into realities. A spirit of hopefulness of prospect at one time affects the speculative dealer or the public investor in connection with some particular stock or class of stocks—a sunny morning, cheerful news of trade, a reduction of the bank-rate with an easier command of capital, may be the determining cause upon the mind—under this influence purchases of stocks are made which show a chance of improvement, and with this additional demand their price ascends. The contagiousness of feeling is notorious, especially when it is displayed by a mass of persons. Other speculators and investors, seeing the prices of this section of investments rise, grow hopeful, by infection, that other investments in which they are more particularly interested will also^{"9} improve by frequent purchases—especially where an affinity exists between the industries they represent, such as coal and iron shares: hence extended buyings in different classes of securities occur, with a consequent increase in value. The movement in the one direction may thus permeate practically the various markets, and the result may be due almost exclusively to the propagation, by the force of sympathy, of sanguine feelings from investor to investor. These feelings concretely express themselves in prices. In the gradual creation of a commercial inflation and collapse¹ it is found that when one trade prospers, or appears to prosper, others participate in the upward movement.

It can readily be seen that if increased profits are realised in any particular trade there is more money to spend in the products of other trades, which thus receive an impetus; but

¹ Collapse: Latin *col* (*con*), together, and *labi* (*lapsus*), to fall; to fall together, like the sides of a hollow body, by external pressure or the withdrawal of the contents. In a commercial collapse we perceive the twofold operation of the withdrawal of reality and the pressure of fear.